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THE NATION'S

RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEACE.

Address delivered at the New England Convention of the National Reform Association, held at Boston, in February, 1895.

BY

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TWELFTH THOUSAND.

BOSTON:

THE AMERICAN PEACE SOCIETY,

1899.

Pax quaerenda pace

THE NATION'S RESPONSIBILITY FOR PEACE.

A nation's responsibility for making and keeping peace, in its relations to other nations, is the same as that of the individual in his relations to others. There is not one moral law for men and another for nations. The principles which ought to govern the life and conduct of the one are equally obligatory in the case of the other. The moral law is as unbending, the conscience as imperative when a man voluntarily compounds his deeds with those of other men as when he acts alone. Whatever in principle is a crime for a man is a crime for a nation.

Individuals are under obligation, according to accessible light, to accept and to follow the moral law of right, and the Christian law of love. Nothing else dare be asserted of nations. The Golden Rule spans the seas and reaches across national frontiers as well as over the distances which separate individual men. It is a radically false position that a nation exists for itself alone, for the exclusive good of its own people. It exists for others as for itself. The law of love and of self-sacrifice is an essential part, is indeed the very highest part of the expression of its outgoing life. No nation, therefore, can rightly be called Christian which does not, in its relations

to all other peoples, follow this law. If it be impossible, as has been asserted in prominent quarters, to found and conduct a State on the principles contained in the sermon on the mount, then no Christian nation can ever exist. From all this it follows that positive peace-making, not peace-keeping merely but the effort to bring the peoples of the earth to a permanent state of peace and harmonious co-operation, is the very highest of the nation's obligations.

The responsibility of a nation rests upon its geographical position and limits; its intellectual and moral enlightenment; its power of exerting influence, whether this be material, intellectual or moral; its religious, social and political ideals and purposes; and its general historic character and development. Looked at from these various standpoints, it will be easily seen that responsibility for the creation and maintenance of the peace of the world rests upon the United States as upon no other country.

Our country is predestined by its geographical position and extent to be the peace-maker of the world; it ought to give all diligence to make its calling and election sure. With the exception of the northern and about half of the southern frontier (and the exception is of no great importance) we have no border line connecting us with other nations. The wide seas intervene. This separation naturally relieves us of many of the complications and anxieties which arise from close proximity. It tends

to make us a quiet, peace-loving, peace-seeking, unarmed people. This has been its practical effect. It has been difficult to maintain a militia on our soil. No effort has ever been made to have much of a standing army, and our navy, about which we have been most tempted to sin, has led a precarious existence. It is true that by reason of the cable and the swifter-growing ships we are constantly getting nearer to other countries and are in increasing danger of losing the peaceful spirit which our isolation has had much to do with creating. But the isolation can never be wholly overcome and will continue to exert a benign influence.

Though set apart we have been set in a large and goodly place. We have no excuse for coveting any nation's climate or soil or productions. We have these in a variety nowhere else known. We need not fret ourselves into a fighting spirit by seeking an outlet by sea to the rest of the world, as Russia is doing on the east and the west, for all the paths of the oceans are open to us. With thirteen thousand miles of seacoast, we need not envy any nation a few island stations. God, in his geographic and historic providences, has thus set us apart that he might build up among the nations of the earth one with a new spirit, and thus lead the world to peace. We may thwart his purposes by selfishness, narrowness, fear and the wish to be like the armor-clad peoples across the water, but we cannot do this without basely trampling under our feet his clearly expressed intentions as to our destiny.

Our responsibility arising from intellectual and moral enlightenment is very great. We are fond of talking about our great public school system and the privileges of a common education which it gives to all citizens. Higher education is well developed among us for a comparatively large proportion of our youth. Making proper allowance for national buncombe from which the most of us suffer more or less, we may safely assert that intellectual enlightenment for the people as a whole is considerably greater in the United States than in any other part of the world. Morally our responsibility is still larger. No other nation, with possibly one exception, has had such a schooling in Christian morals. The Bible has been our text-book in practical ethics. Fifty millions of our people, however poorly they may have profited from its instruction, have been in contact with it from their childhood. I have been repeatedly told, on the continent of Europe, by thoughtful men, that it is the Bible which has made us a great people. It has certainly made us a responsible people. The sermon on the mount is the moral light according to which it is our national duty to walk. Neither the people, nor Congresses, nor Cabinets, nor Presidents can be excused in the least from this high obligation.

Passing to the power to exert influence, the United States here certainly stands alone. Her great extent and variety of territory; her population already nearly double in size that of any other civilized country, if we exclude

Russia from the list; her vast wealth and inexhaustible resources; her general intellectual enlightenment and moral and religious advantages; the character of her civil and political institutions;—all these invest her with a tremendous power of influencing the world's destinies. If the American people were as quick to recognize the exceptional responsibilities imposed by this peculiar position of influence as they are to pride themselves on the reputation which it is supposed to bring, our spread-eagleism would all die and our already fairly commendable zeal to promote the good of the world would be enlarged into an earnest, united, persistent and heroic effort, along all lines, to bring the family of nations to realize the highest attainable ideal of brotherhood and mutual helpfulness.

Looking a little closer, we find that much of our responsibility arises from our professed religious, social and political ideals and purposes. What a nation intelligently and conscientiously professes to be determines in no small measure what it ought to do. In religion, we are built on freedom of conscience. Church and State have no connection. The Christian people group themselves into religious organizations according to their preferences. According to our theory no man can be forced to be a Christian, or hindered in the least from becoming one. Socially, we are built on simple manhood. We profess to have no caste, no class distinctions either temporary or permanent. Our social circles and groups form and break up according to individual preferences,

pursuits and conveniences. Our political claims are freedom and self-government, equality of right and privilege for all before the law. These great religious, social and political principles faithfully carried out naturally lead to peace, for peace always follows in the footsteps of liberty. Furthermore they are a proclamation of peace in advance. Whoever announces that he will live by them declares his purpose to live in peace with his fellowmen. Our nation in founding itself on these principles has renounced forever the supposed right of conquest. It has declared in the most solemn manner that it will treat with justice, and respect the rights of, every other nation, however weak and defenceless; that it will do as it would be done by; that it will abstain from every sort of open or covert interference with the affairs of others. The rôle which by the nature of our institutions we have assumed before the world has laid upon us the high obligation to manifest straightforwardness, kindness and forbearance in all our foreign affairs. "A spirited foreign policy," in the usual sense of the expression, is utterly unworthy of a nation into whose whole structure are built the principles of freedom and equal rights.

How has the nation met its responsibility?

Though there are dark spots here and there and plenty of guilt for low motives and bad spirit, yet there is much in the record of the 108 years since the creation of the constitution of which no one need be ashamed. Of international wars we have had only three in all that time, and

these combined covered a period of less than five years. The war of 1812 lasted two and a half years and was a piece of international misfortune quite as much as of international crime. An ocean cable would certainly have prevented it. The light of history shows that the American sin of impatience and hot-headedness was quite as much the cause of the war as the British sin of impressment. It was condemned by many of our citizens at the time, especially in New England, and very few well-read people can now be found who justify it. The little war with Algiers lasted only a few weeks and has been practically forgotten. The two years' war with Mexico was chargeable to the crime of slavery, and is now universally condemned. At the time many of the best citizens of the country were amazed and indignant at the government's folly in entering into it. Lowell, writing of the war at the time, in the Biglow papers, said:

> Ez fer war, I call it murder,—
> There you hev it plain an' flat;
> I don't want to go no furder
> Than my Testyment fer that.

We have had, then, in our history more than one hundred years of peace with other nations and less than five years of war, and we have had the national honesty and conscientiousness to confess in considerable measure our guilt in connection with these five years. This is no mean record.

The peace of the world has been powerfully promoted also by our union of States and by the Supreme Court which constitutes in reality a great inter-state tribunal, of the same type, in many respects, as that which it is proposed to establish for the nations of the world. It is true that the light of this union went nearly out during the bloody days of the civil war. This war, one of the wickedest in the history of the world, was the inevitable outcome of the monstrous crime of slavery, of which the whole nation, not the South only, was deeply guilty. The guilt of the war was the guilt of slavery, which was a concrete and wholesale denial of every principle of liberty and free government, a huge national lie, which came back to scorch and blister the lips that uttered it. But in spite of these dark and horrible years, whose fruits we are still reaping, the union of the States which began with the first federation of the colonies has gone steadily on until it has built itself into a massive structure extending from ocean to ocean, whose two chief pillars are entire local self-government and complete national union and co-operation. The result of this union has been, with the exception mentioned, an unbroken and ever deepening peace. Differences between the States, where there have been any (there have been almost none), have gone to the Supreme Court and there been settled with less difficulty than differences between individuals in the ordinary courts of law. The United States of North America are the prefiguration and the first historical exemplifica-

tion of what is sometime, in some form, to be the United States of the world, the result of which shall be universal and perpetual peace.

Our theory that a man of any land has a right to choose his home wherever he can find one and change it as often as he pleases has done much to break down international prejudices and exclusiveness, and thus prepare the way for peace. Up to the beginning of this century it was held that a man owes perpetual allegiance to the country in which he was born. This theory of slavery to country the United States has destroyed. Whoever becomes a naturalized citizen of this country ceases to owe any allegiance to his native land, whether he be at home or on the remotest foreign shore. The same is true of an American who chooses to adopt the citizenship of another country. By opening our citizenship to people of all lands we have proclaimed aloud the brotherhood and essential equality of right and privilege of all men.

The influence of this doctrine and practice in breaking down hostilities between the nations and bringing them into closer sympathy with each other can not be overestimated. It is painful to have to record that we have in a very wicked way belied our own teaching in our treatment of one or two peoples, notably of the Chinese, but this bit of national folly and iniquity we shall soon get over.

The United States has likewise nobly met its responsibility for peace by arbitrating nearly all of its difficulties with foreign countries, by acting as arbitrator between

other nations and by using its good offices to bring other governments to adjust their conflicts by peaceful means. Over against the three wars mentioned above we are able to set thirty-seven cases in which our country has settled important differences with other nations by arbitration, nearly as many as all other countries combined can show. In nearly a dozen instances the President of the United States has been called upon to act as arbitrator for other powers, and in recent years our ambassadors, ministers and consuls have been doing much to promote peace in all quarters of the globe.

In view of the historic record which the nation has thus made and the character which it has built up before the world, it must be confessed that its responsibility stands much higher to-day than ever before. The responsibility is further hightened by the fact that the old world is just now possessed by an unaccountable military mania which is pushing the nations on to financial ruin and to a social and political cataclysm whose disastrous consequences, unless prevented in some way, can be only dimly guessed. If a nation was ever needed to stand up as a bulwark against militarism, it is at the present hour. There is none but ours to do this. The rest have gone too far wrong already. Will our country do its duty? Will it stand by its historic character and record, or will it allow itself to be carried away with the general flood of senseless rivalry in war preparation? It is too early yet to answer the question

fully. What the answer will have to be is certain if the present movement for the universal introduction of military instruction into the public schools and the movement for a forced militia service in the States come to realization. We can not yet believe that these movements will be allowed to accomplish their purpose. Opposition to them is growing throughout the country as their real significance becomes known. They are so thoroughly un-American, so fraught with danger to our civil and religious liberties, that the people ought to rise up in common accord and stop them. We do not conceal from ourselves that there is imminent danger from them, and we raise our voice in solemn protest against them as unworthy of our country, as contradictory to the spirit of our institutions, and therefore as unpatriotic.

It has been seriously proposed to increase our standing army. There is not the shadow of an excuse for doing this, as is clear from the fact that each advocate of it gives a different reason for doing it. Of this increase to any serious extent there is no immediate danger, though it will be the necessary outcome of military extension if undertaken along other lines.

In the matter of the navy we are going steadily astray and no one can prophesy where the evil will stop. Now that the work has been commenced, the war spirits, the alarmists, the imitators among us will never be satisfied until the United States navy is as large as that of England, and then the cry will be raised, as it is now con-